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ABSTRACT

Oaklea (Oregon) Middle School provides an innovative program of instruction to district students in grades 5-8. To facilitate this individualized approach, the school is divided into four smaller schools in which teachers and students spend four years together as students proceed through the instructional program. An important feature of this approach is the school-wide establishment of annual goals. The instructional organization of this "school-within-a-school" approach includes assigning interdisciplinary cooperative teaching teams to each of the four smaller schools (called "Rivers"). Within Rivers, students are often cross-graded according to individual achievement levels established by skill tests. In addition, several special programs such as an "occupational versatility" program supplement the basic curriculum. A strong organizational structure in which teachers, classified staff, and support staff play a particularly strong role is the key to effective management of such diversified instructional programs. In summary, careful planning, goal-based management, and an enthusiastic, committed staff have all contributed to high student achievement and morale. (LH)

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STAFF GOAL-SETTING SUPPORTS INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS AT OAKLEA MIDDLE SCHOOL

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Staff Goal-Setting Supports Innovative Programs at Oaklea Middle School

Oaklea Middle School in Junction City, Oregon, provides an innovative program of instruction to district students in grades 5-8. Emphasis in the rural middle school, opened in a new building in the fall of 1976, is on individualized instruction for the approximately 600 students. To facilitate this individualized approach, the school is divided into four smaller schools in which teachers and students spend four years together as students proceed through the instructional program.

An important feature of the Oaklea approach is the goal-setting which annually involves all teaching faculty and support staff. This school-wide establishment of annual goals provides the mechanism for ongoing improvement of programs which have received national attention and recognition for their excellence.

Among features of the Oaklea middle school approach are:

- A school building designed with special features to complement the middle-school programs.
- The division of students and teaching staff into four "schools-within-the-school" to provide more personalized instruction and increase the continuity of learning for students.
- Innovative assignments of teaching staff to "Interdisciplinary Teams" for the development of programs and the monitoring of individual student progress.
- Annual faculty and staff goal-setting and review.
- Shared decision making involving all faculty in the development of programs.

Oaklea Designed for "School-Within-a-School" Approach

Following a two-year research and planning process that involved many community members, the Junction City Board of Education decided to change from a junior high school to a middle school structure in the district. The new middle school would organize students and staff into four smaller schools within a single school building, providing for an innovative instructional program. A new school building was completed and opened in the fall of 1976 as Oaklea Middle School.

The Oaklea building features design elements which accommodate the school-within-a-school approach. Four groups of classrooms surround the central Media Center area. Two-thirds of the classrooms have movable walls to facilitate varying groups of students for instruction. Classrooms in each of the smaller schools open into a common learning area or "Learning Laboratory" containing space for both group and independent study by students in that smaller school. Lockers for students are located in these adjoining laboratories to reduce student traffic. An Educational Resource Center is nearby, used for student testing, remedial instruction, special education programs and enrichment activities.

This design reflects the instructional organization of Oaklea. The four schools-within-the-school, called "Rivers" and named after Oregon rivers, are the organizational framework for all Oaklea students and teachers. Students, teachers and teaching aides are assigned to Rivers, with 5-6 teachers and approximately 150 students, equally distributed among the four grades, in each River. Students are assigned to a River as they enter the school and are expected to remain in that River throughout the four years at Oaklea.

Instruction Organized by "River"

In each River, an "Interdisciplinary Co-Operative Teaching Team" of teachers, assisted by aides assigned to the team, is responsible for providing instruction to all River students in the five basic skills areas of reading, math, language arts,

Schools-within-the-school and schoolwide goal setting are important elements of the Oaklea Middle School program.

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science and social studies. Teachers work together to organize River programs and develop instruction for River students. Classroom teaching is done by individual teachers, however, not by teams. River teachers meet regularly to coordinate instructional programs, which include individualized schedules for students according to their needs.

There is a school-wide curriculum in the five basic subject areas at Oaklea, with each River Interdisciplinary team responsible for instruction within that River. Within Rivers, students are often cross-graded according to individual achievement levels established by skill tests. Cross-level groupings are the norm in reading and math and take place occasionally in language arts. In science and social studies, students are instructed by Interdisciplinary Team teachers by grade level.

Students spend one-half of each school day concentrating on the five basic skill areas. The remainder of the school day is spent in exploratory and supplementary classes provided by River teachers or by River-assigned members of "Specialist Teams" who provide instruction in physical education, music, industrial arts, home arts, and arts/crafts. Student schedules are individualized according to skill development. Students work closely with their Homeroom Teachers, to whom they are assigned at entry for the full four years, as they develop schedules within the River curriculum.

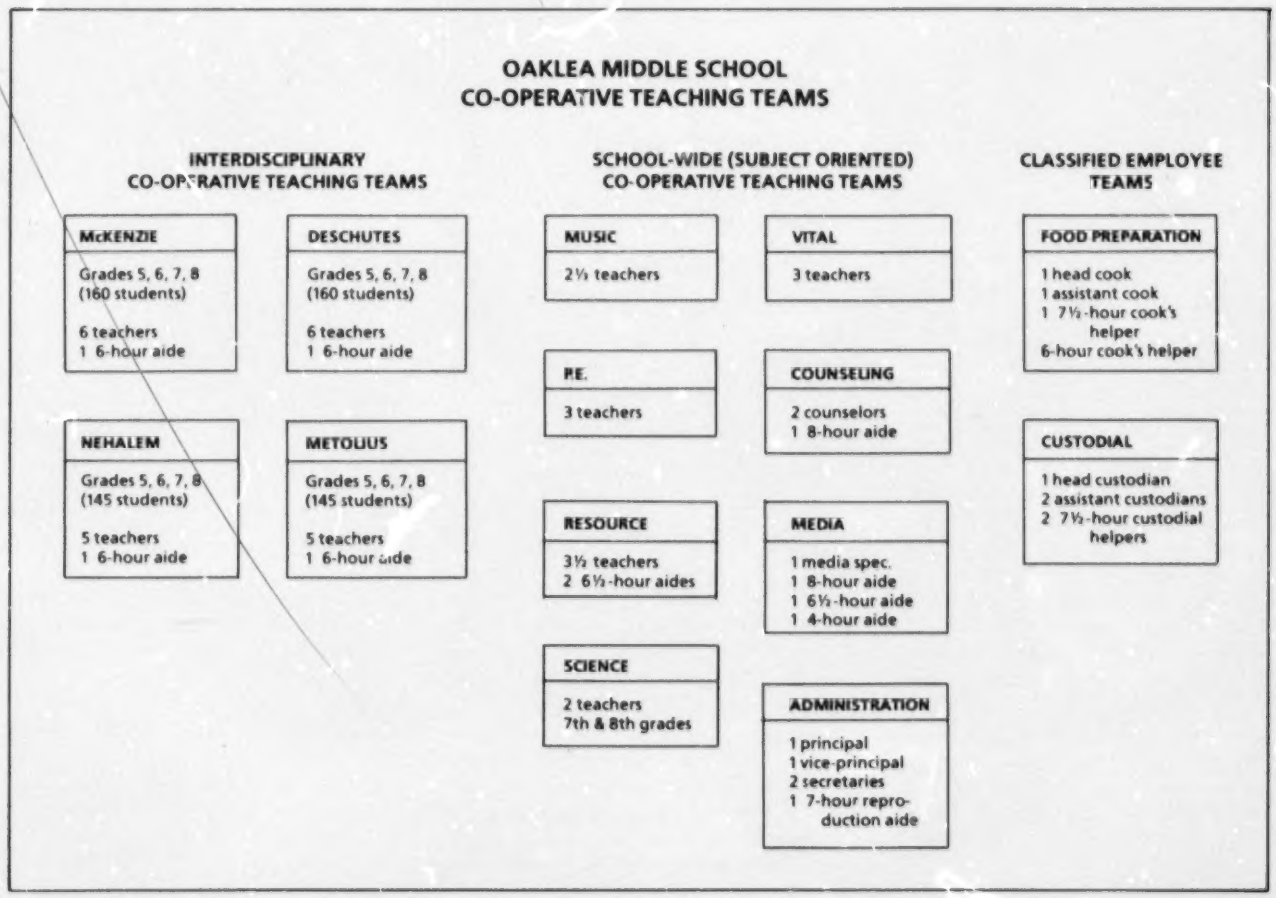
Special Programs Supplement Basics

River instruction in the basics is supplemented by several special programs. The Oaklea staff has developed an "Occupational Versatility" program which is offered in three classrooms staffed by a team consisting of an industrial arts teacher, arts and crafts teacher and a home arts teacher. This program is called "VITAL" (Vocational Industrial Technical Arts Learning) and is required for all sixth graders for one-half year. During this time, students complete basic projects in approximately 48 learning areas which introduce them to every area offered by the program. Projects offered in industrial arts include such topics as electricity, electronics, woods and hot metals (welding and foundry projects). The arts and crafts offerings include ceramics, calligraphy, macrame and others; and the home arts portion includes cooking, sewing, nutrition and knitting, among others.

All sixth graders are required to complete work in each of the VITAL learning areas. The three major components of VITAL have at least 10 projects or learning stations each, in graduated complexity, and students are placed in the program according to their learning development and abilities.

Once students complete the required VITAL program in grade 6, they can elect to return and pursue any of the individual areas through the school's selective/elective scheduling available to students in grades 7 and 8 to complete their schedules after fulfilling basics requirements. An exploratory class called "Kaleidoscope" prepares all students in grade 5 for the VITAL program.

All teachers and staff at Oaklea are organized into cooperative teams.



In addition to these programs, all Oaklea students are involved in the daily mid-day Intramural/Exploratory program. Co-educational intramural activities are offered each day, with competitions among the homerooms in each River school rather than school-wide. Exploratory classes are taught by River teachers, who often call upon community members for special assistance in such wide-ranging activities as film-making, first aid, horticulture and solar energy. These classes are of both an exploratory and avocational nature.

Organization Key to Program Management

A strong organizational structure has been developed to manage the diversified instructional programs at Oaklea. All Oaklea teachers and other staff are organized into teams. In addition to River Interdisciplinary Teams, there are subject-oriented "School-Wide Cooperative Teaching Teams" in music, physical education and science, responsible for instruction in those subject areas. Other teams manage the Resource Center, the VITAL program, counseling and the Media Center; and the Principal works with an Administration Team.

Classified employees are also organized in teams. Building secretaries are included in the Administration Team, aides are part of the teaching teams to which they are assigned, and food preparation and custodial teams have been established. Teams are responsible for the organization and management of their assigned areas.

Teachers play a particularly strong role in program management at Oaklea. In addition to their classroom instruction duties, teachers in Interdisciplinary Teams work together to interview, hire and supervise instructional aides for their Rivers. They are also involved in selecting teachers to fill vacancies that occur within their Rivers. Because of the interdisciplinary approach, team members are closely aware of the needs to be filled by any new teacher (e.g., the departing teacher was strong in mathematics, or was a skilled reading teacher). The Team prepares an extensive job description, interviews candidates and presents recommendations for hiring to the principal. Because team members both know the needs and must integrate the new teacher into an existing team, the principal relies heavily on team recommendations in hiring decisions.

OAKLEA MIDDLE SCHOOL
BUILDING-WIDE OBJECTIVES

1977-78	1) Everyone is to use cursive writing exclusively. 2) All written work is to be in complete sentences. 3) Teachers are to use fewer ditto assignments — allow opportunity for more writing.
1978-79	1) Teachers will spend "20 minutes a week" to make positive parent contacts. 2) Give directions only once. 3) Flag salute first period each day.
1979-80	1) Students are expected to use their best, legible handwriting. 2) Stress total school positive attitude. 3) Focus on individual student's behavior. 4) Administer daily timed tests of math facts. 5) Develop a school discipline plan.
1980-81	1) Stress the concept of wellness — both physical and mental.
1981-82	1) Display student work — reinforce student positive attitude and self-image.
1982-83	All teachers will achieve one goal toward becoming computer literate. These goals will be centered around a working knowledge of the capabilities, limitations, and effects of computers. Emphasis will be on information acquisition rather than implementation.

School-wide goals are set each year at Oaklea Middle School.

Teachers are involved in program planning, as well. The principal meets weekly with representatives of each River to keep them aware of current developments in the district and discuss progress within the Rivers. In addition, there are weekly meetings of each River Team to keep track of school developments and to plan for student activities and instruction.

Building-Wide Objectives Set Each Year

Teachers are also very involved in the yearly definition of building-wide objectives for Oaklea. At the school, there is a strong emphasis on continuing to improve instructional opportunities for all students. Each fall at the end of the five-day inservice for teachers before school opens, the faculty reaches consensus on objectives for the upcoming year that can improve the school. Building-wide objectives become the basis for individual goal-setting for teachers.

The building-wide objectives are derived from a number of sources, but are selected and approved by the entire teaching staff. Topics may be suggested by the principal, but often the objectives come from suggestions made by faculty members as an outgrowth of fall inservice activities. The goal for the 1980-81 school year, for example, was to "stress the concept of 'wellness'— both physical and mental" throughout the school. The previous year, several teachers had attended a conference focusing on student awareness of wellness: these teachers spearheaded discussions in the fall inservice sessions that led to the adoption of this as a building-wide objective.

As the year progresses, students are often directly involved in the achievement of the objective. The 1981-82 objective was to "display student work — reinforce student positive attitude and self-image." In implementing the displays, student suggestions were often used and students were very much aware of the objective and how it was being met.

Teachers Set Individual Goals

In addition to the building-wide objectives, every teacher and classified staff member sets individual goals each year which are approved by supervisors and evaluated for completion at the end of the year. Goals are focused on personal and professional growth that will lead to improving the school. Teachers are required to set at least three goals:

- A goal that reflects the building-wide objective(s) in a way that can be individually implemented.
- A goal that is shared throughout the teacher's River.
- A personal goal

Goals are prepared in the fall and discussed in individual teacher meetings with the principal or assistant principal. At that time, teachers present written goal statements, activities for implementation, and criteria for meeting those goals. Year-end evaluations are held with the same supervisor, with teachers required to bring documentation of completion of the goal. This documentation can take many forms. One teacher may bring a card showing the successful completion of a first aid class, another may bring a newly-completed inventory of school equipment. There is considerable personal discretion allowed in goal-setting, although goals must be clear and are approved by the supervisor. The emphasis at Oaklea is on the setting of rational, reachable goals.

In addition to individual goals, teachers work with their Interdisciplinary Teams to set River goals, reaching consensus on a particular goal to benefit River students. In one case, the River decided to reinforce positive student behavior and established bi-weekly parties to reward "Super Kids" for their excellent behavior. Another River specified a goal to take students on exploratory and recreational outings after school. This project involved teachers, aides, students and parents in such activities as roller skating and cross-country skiing.

Goal Setting Includes Support Staff

Aides, custodial, kitchen and secretarial staff at Oaklea are also involved in the annual goal-setting process. These classified personnel are not required to set goals that reflect the building-wide goal but must set one goal related to students and one goal related to personal growth.

Support staff goal-setting and evaluation are handled by supervisors in their respective areas. Aides work with teachers in the Rivers to which they are assigned, the head custodian supervises goal-setting with the remainder of the janitorial staff and the head cook oversees the process with the other kitchen staff. In all cases, the principal or vice principal approves goals presented by supervisors.

Including the support staff in the goal-setting has been very beneficial to the school. Last year, for example, a cook was concerned about kitchen operating costs, researched the consumption of complete lunches and the food wastage, and began offering a la carte selections. This small change in the operation of the kitchen made a significant difference in the budget. In other cases, the custodial staff solved a problem related to inefficient cleaning, one custodian built new shelves for a storage room, and the school's two secretaries upgraded the school's packet of information for new students. These goals were identified by staff members and their completion made important contributions to the operation of the school.

This Certificate Recognizes
that
is a student at Oaklea Middle School
and continues to contribute towards the
"Excellence In Education" award given on
September 28, 1983 by Secretary of
Education Bell in Washington, D.C.

To commemorate Oaklea's recognition as an unusually successful secondary school in the national "Excellence in Education" program, each student received a special certificate signed by Principal Sara Jane Bates.

Oaklea Student Achievement High

Careful planning, goal based management and an enthusiastic, committed staff have all contributed to Oaklea's success as an innovative middle school. Many visitors travel to Oaklea each year to observe programs, and the school has been featured in a number of national reports about exemplary educational programs. This year, Oaklea was recognized as an unusually successful secondary school in the "Excellence in Education" program by President Reagan and U.S. Secretary of Education Terrel Bell.

Morale at the school is high, as students, teachers and staff share a lively involvement in Oaklea programs and activities. Annual goal-setting promotes staff ownership, and individualized instruction provides an involving, interesting approach to learning for students.

The students have continually responded well to the instructional approach. There are few discipline problems, virtually no vandalism and average daily student attendance is an unusually high 94.5 percent. Student achievement levels are high, as well. In April of 1983, over 50 percent of students in grade 6 and nearly 70 percent of students in grade 8 achieved above the national norms in reading, math and language arts.

In this rural middle school, the focus is on learning; and students, teachers, administrators, staff, parents and community members are justifiably proud of their school.

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